

Budget Tidbits... just the facts

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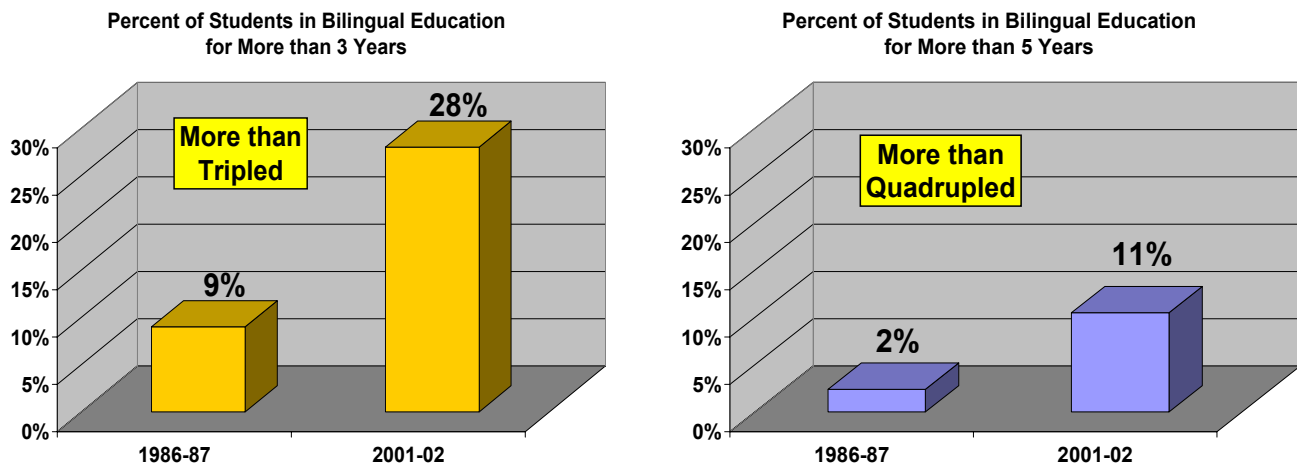
Budget Brief #5: Bilingual Education (2/8/05)

- Bilingual education is one of the most rapidly growing budget programs, with costs increasing more than 19 percent this biennium and 121 percent compared to ten years ago.¹

A. Enrollment growth is Nearly Twice what Census Data would forecast.

- The census showed a 98 percent increase in the last decade of Washington youth that do not speak English very well – yet bilingual enrollment grew by 173 percent over the same time.²

B. Increasing Length of Stay is a Significant Driver of Enrollment.



Source: English Language Learners in K-12: Trends, Policies & Research in Washington State (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, January 2005)

C. Incentivizing Longer Stays?

- Districts receive \$725 in extra funding for each bilingual student and lose those funds when students transition out of the program. The state does not time limit a district's receipt of funds, nor does it provide incentives for quicker transitions.
- California, Massachusetts and Arizona all have one-year English immersion programs. Research in California indicates higher test scores and mainstream transition rates.³
- One-year immersion in Washington could reduce length of stay for transitioning students by 2/3, yielding savings of up to \$15-25 M now and \$50-60 M in future budgets.⁴

Bottom Line

The bilingual education program continues to grow rapidly, with students staying ever longer, and state policies encouraging such activity. Is there a better way?

1. Ways & Means "Overview of K-12 Budget Issues: 2005 Session" (\$104.7 M in 03-05 to \$124.8 M in 05-07); LEAP Historical Data (\$56.3 M in 95-97)

2. English Language Learners in K-12: Trends, Policies & Research in Washington State (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, January 2005, p. 10)

3. *Id.*, Appendix C

4. *Id.*, p. 48 (Average Transition Length of Stay is 2.81 years); savings estimate assumes 9/1/05 implementation date